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General and complete disarmament: implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

Letter dated 19 April 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, with the support of the United Nations Development Programme and the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining, convened a conference on the topic "Progress towards the Ottawa Convention's Aims in Central Asia" on 15 and 16 April 2004 in Dushanbe.

The Dushanbe conference was held in accordance with the President's Action Programme for implementing the Convention, adopted at the fifth meeting of States parties in September 2003.

Delegations from the Central Asian countries, China and Afghanistan, donor States, international organizations and also diplomatic missions of foreign and international organizations accredited to Tajikistan took part in the Conference.

Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan addressed the Conference and participated in its work.

I should be most grateful if you would have this letter and the statement by the Co-Chairmen of the Dushanbe Landmine Conference annexed to it distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 73 (p) of the fifty-eighth session.

(*Signed*) Rashid **Alimov**
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Annex to the letter dated 19 April 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Tajikistan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and Russian]

Progress towards the Ottawa Convention's Aims in Central Asia

Dushanbe Landmine Conference, 15-16 April 2004

Statement by the Co-Chairmen

A conference on the topic "Progress towards the Ottawa Convention's Aims in Central Asia", convened by His Excellency Mr. Talbak Nazarov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, was held on 15 and 16 April 2004 in Dushanbe. The Dushanbe Conference was organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) with the support of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD).

The Dushanbe Conference was held in accordance with the President's Action Programme for implementing the Convention, adopted at the fifth meeting of States parties in September 2003. In that document, the President of the meeting, His Excellency Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Thailand, stated that, in implementing the Convention, each region was encountering its own problems and using its own potential, which required regional initiatives and measures to raise awareness of the fact that resolving the issue of anti-personnel mines was a continuous process leading towards the Convention's First Review Conference.

The opening remarks were delivered by His Excellency Mr. Saidamer Zuhurov, Deputy Prime Minister for Security; His Excellency Mr. Sorayoutht Prompog, representing the President of the fifth meeting of States parties; Her Excellency Ms. Heidemaria Guerer, Ambassador of Austria to Tajikistan; His Excellency Mr. Christian Faessler, member of the Council of the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD); His Excellency Mr. Yves Bargain, Head of the Centre of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Dushanbe; Professor Daniel Thurer, member of the Committee of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC); and Mr. William Paton, United Nations Resident Coordinator. The speakers underscored the importance of the Dushanbe Conference in ensuring dialogue among all the Central Asian States on the problems caused by the use of anti-personnel mines in the region.

Following an overview of the Convention provided by the GICHD representative, Mr. Kerry Brinkert, Manager of the Convention's Implementation Support Unit, the Conference heard detailed reports on the efforts being undertaken by the Republic of Tajikistan to destroy stockpiled anti-personnel mines, clear mined areas and take legislative and other measures to prevent and suppress prohibited acts. It was pointed out, in particular, that Tajikistan had completed its programme to destroy landmine stockpiles on 31 March 2004 and had achieved significant progress in preparing to clear mined areas. The Co-Chairmen noted with

satisfaction that Tajikistan was undertaking efforts to carry out its obligations under the Convention.

ICRC provided an overview of the human impact of anti-personnel mines. Dr. Mohammad Haider Reza, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan, then informed the participants in the Conference of the steps being taken by his country to implement the Convention. The Co-Chairmen expressed their satisfaction to the representative of Afghanistan — the country with the largest number of landmines — for its determination to implement the Convention and noted that Turkmenistan's decision to reduce significantly the number of anti-personnel mines, which had been indicated previously, required retaining a small quantity of them for training in accordance with article 3 of the Convention.

Representatives of OCSC, UNDP, GICHD, NATO, ICRC and the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action made presentations on assistance provided or made available by their organizations to support the States of Central Asia in dealing with problems caused by anti-personnel mines. The Co-Chairmen noted that the efforts of those organizations and the funds provided by the donors were concrete demonstrations of the international community's intention to work in partnership in order to fulfil the humanitarian aims of the Convention.

Noting that more than 140 States had acceded to the Convention, including several militarily significant countries as well as countries experiencing serious security problems, Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) John MacBride of Canada emphasized that States were fully able to ensure their security without the use of anti-personnel mines. Representatives of countries which are not parties to the Convention then addressed the Conference, sharing their views regarding the Convention.

The importance of the Dushanbe Conference, which had served as an informal forum of central Asian countries in preparing for the Convention's First Review Conference — the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World — was underscored by Austrian Ambassador Heidemaria Guerer on behalf of the Nairobi Summit's President-Designate, Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch. It was noted that the States parties were placing their hopes in the Nairobi Summit and aimed to participate in it. The International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) shared those expectations for the Summit, expressing the hope that 150 States would have acceded to the Convention by the time that it was held, that non-state armed forces would observe the Convention's standards, that an understanding would be reached on the interpretation of various articles of the Convention, and that significant success would be achieved in destroying stockpiles, providing assistance to victims, and demining.

In summing up the results of the Dushanbe Conference, the Co-Chairmen expressed the belief that the Conference was an important step towards achieving mutual agreement among the countries of the region, noted the commitment of the States parties in Central Asia to implement the Convention, welcomed the desire of States in other regions to engage in a dialogue on addressing the threat posed by anti-personnel mines to peace and security, invited those States to take measures to adopt the Convention, and once again reiterated their appeal to States and relevant organizations to participate at the highest level in the Nairobi Summit on a Mine-Free World.

The concluding address at the Dushanbe Conference was given by Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan.

(*Signed*) Salohiddin **Nasriddinov**
Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

(*Signed*) William **Paton**
United Nations Resident Coordinator